

Activity 1: Examining Perspectives

In Vonnegut's story, the government decides that competition leads to an unfair and unstable society, so it tries to make everyone the same. Harrison Bergeron, on the other hand, wants to be the best that he can be. Is competition necessary for high achievement?

Choose an activity that you are involved in, such as painting, playing football, or acting. Should this activity be competitive always, sometimes, or never?

- Make a two-column chart in which you list the advantages and disadvantages of competition in your chosen activity.
- Evaluate the pros and cons and form an opinion about the role of competition in this activity.
- Write a short persuasive essay arguing for your position. Be sure to include support from your chart.

Activity 2: Investigation

In "Harrison Bergeron," the job of the Handicapper General is to make sure that no one in the country has any physical, mental, or creative advantage over anyone else. You probably know that government efforts to squash individuality have taken place in real life. One such movement, the Cultural Revolution, was led by the communist Mao-Tse-Tung in China from 1966 through 1976. What were its effects on Chinese society?

Use the Internet and other resources to investigate the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards who carried it out.

- Who was the target of this program? How widespread was it?
- What did the Red Guards do to carry out the Cultural Revolution?
- What suffering did families experience?
- How did Mao's plan ultimately affect individuals and society as a whole?

Write a report in which you explain the aims of the Cultural Revolution and compare them to those of the Handicapper General.